Games of the Galaxy:

HOLOCHESS

By Mike Kelly

This is a repost of the Rules to Holochess, original seen on the starwars-rpg.net website. That site suffered a MAJOR server meltdown, and its Archives dissipeared. I have retyped and redone graphics from what I had written from the site, and am sharing them here. The info there was too good to be lost.

Besides, I need someone to play with.
Ris'sa

Following Sabacc, Holochess is generally considered the galaxy's second most popular game. It is a favorite of spacers and aristocrats alike, and this diverse spectrum of players has also lead to a wide array of variations that have become popular within the many niches of society. Detailed here are two of the most well-known (and most dissimilar) versions: Dejarik, a brutal gladiatorial contest of chance and positioning, and Coutier, a deceptive simple game of pure strategy.

Much like Sabacc, the origins of holochess are a subject of much dispute. All agree that the game began at the time even before modern holographic technology, but no one seems to be able to pinpoint exactly where it began.

The Corellians insist that the game was invented by their ancient ocean explorers, and that as their early spaceships were under development, the game pieces were converted to holograms so that it could be played in zero-g. The Corellians say that the original game was much like Dejarik. Conversely, both the Alderaanians and the Coruscanti say that the game was invented by their respective palace guardsmen, to pass the time while on watch. They say that variants like Courier and Chambers are the game's most direct descendants.

Intriguingly, the Duro have a similar game, known as Lai Kyedts, which has been an important part of their culture long before the invention of the hyperdrive, and many scholars now believe that it was *this* game, not any game designed by humans, that was the true predecessor to modern holochess.

Players:

Holochess is usually played by two, through variations do exist for three and four players.
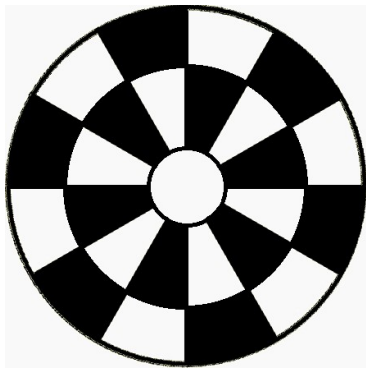
The Board:

The Holochess board is made up of a large circle about a half meter in diameter. The board is divided into three concentric circles, called orbits. The central circle is always white. The outer orbits are divided into twelve equal segments, known as rays, which are colored alternately black and white. See Diagram 1.

Rules of Dejarik:

Dejarik is played with a set of eight pieces, each of which has unique movement, defensive and offensive capabilities. The players sit on opposite sides of the board, and each control four of the holographic combatants.

The Traditional pieces, and their prospective ratings, are as follows:

There are two power pieces in a traditional Dejarik set, the Mantellian Savrip and the Monnok. Power pieces have high ratings in all three capabilities.

 The Savrip has the ratings of **Attack** 6, **Defense** 6, **Movement** 2.

 The Monnok has the ratings of **Attack** 6, **Defense** 5, **Movement** 3.

Besides this, there are two Mid pieces, the Ghhhk and the Houjix, which have mid-range ratings in all three capabilities.

The Ghhhk has the ratings of **Attack** 4, **Defense** 3, **Movement** 2.

The Houjix has the ratings of **Attack** 4, **Defense** 4, **Movement** 1.

After these, there are two Defensive pieces, the Kirtan Strider and the Ng'ok which have high defense ratings and low attack ratings.

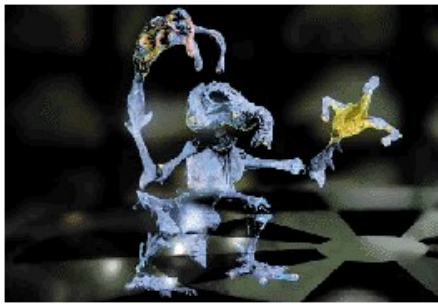The Strider has the ratings of **Attack** 2, **Defense** 7, **Movement** 3.

The Ng'ok has the ratings of **Attack** 3, **Defense** 8, **Movement** 1.

Finally, there are two Offensive pieces, the K'lor'slug and the Molator, which have high attack ratings and low defense ratings.

The K'lor'slug has the ratings of **Attack** 7, **Defense** 3, **Movement** 2.

The Molator has the ratings of **Attack** 8, **Defense** 2, **Movement** 2.

(Note that these are only the most common pieces, a wide variety of additional sets of pieces can be purchased, with everything from starships to droids to mythical warriors to gravball personalities to current politicians. [The latter are particular popular, simply for exchanges like "Let's see… I'll move Leia 2 spaces clockwise and attack Borsk Fey'lya… prepare to die, Bothan Boy!"] These new pieces may also come with different sets of capabilities. Check the instructions that come with the alternate piece-sets for more information.)

The Object of Dejarik is to destroy all the opponents pieces, before the opponent can destroy yours.
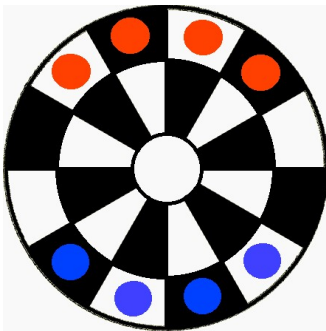
Diagram 2

At the beginning of the game, the computer randomly divides the pieces between the players, and places them on opposites sides of the board, in the four spaces closest to the respective players (See Diagram 2). Each game a player may have different pieces on his side, so it is important to know the capabilities of each playing piece.

After the pieces appear, the players decide who will have the first move, often by flipping a coin. After that, play proceeds as follows:

During each turn, a player is allowed to take two consecutive actions, which can be used to either move one of their pieces to a new space, or to attack an opponent's piece. (So, during a turn, a player may move a piece twice, or may attack two other pieces, or move and then attack, or attack and then move.) However a player must use both of their allotted actions each turn.
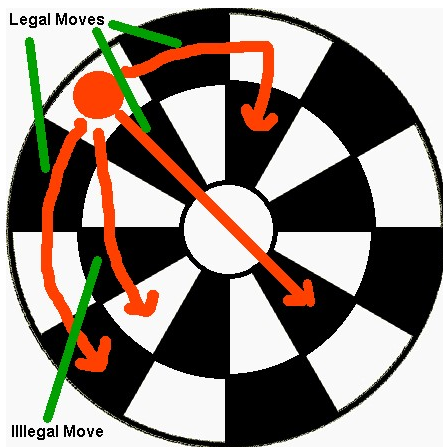
Legal and illegal moves for a piece with a Move Rating of 3

Moving: When moving a piece across the game board, the piece must be moved its full amount of spaces designated by its movement rating. For example, when moving the Strider, the player must move the piece 3 spaces, and may not move it only 2 or 1 in order to place it in a more favorable position. When moving, a piece may move to any space adjacent to its own [either around the orbit or along the ray]' but cannot move diagonally, or into a space occupied by another piece (See Diagram 3)

Attacking: If a player has positioned one of his pieces adjacent to an opposing piece (assuming he has an action remaining in his turn), the player may declare an attack on that piece.

The results of the attack are calculated by the computer, using the piece's attack rating versus the opposing piece's defense rating. (Even though the battle results are decided randomly, the computer's calculations are based on the ratings of the pieces. Thus, the Savirp would have an even chance of against the Ng'ok, but a 4 to 1 advantage over the Ghhhk.)

There are four possible outcomes to an attack, determined by the computer:

1. The player's piece may destroy his opponent's. This is appropriately known as a "kill". These kill sequences can be very graphic (except in children's versions), which realistic animations and sound effects. Afters this, the opponent's piece is removed from the board, but the attack piece remains in its present space.
2. The player's piece may beat its opponent's piece by a very small margin. This results in a "push". Strategically, pushing is one of the most important parts of the game. In a push, the attacker "pushes" his opponent's piece to any open adjacent space, either to block other pieces, to set the piece up for an easy kill, or to simply get it out of the way.
3. The Opponent's piece may tie or beat the player's piece by a small margin. This is called a "counter-push". This works the same way as a push, except hat the opponent is now pushing the attacking piece into an open adjacent space.
4. The opponent's piece may destroy the players piece. This is known as a "counter-kill", and can often change the strategy of the entire match.

To-The-Death: If each player only has one piece remaining on the board, a final confrontation occurs. The two pieces move to the center of the board, and battle To-The-Death. Each piece uses its highest rating (be it Attack or Defense) to determine the outcome. If the first round does not result in a kill, then the same process is repeated, until only one is left standing. This player has won the game.

RPG Notes: Obviously, there isn't a "computer" to decide the outcome of each attack, so you'll need to use dice instead. It's really very simple. The attacker rolls his piece's Attack rating versus the opposing piece Defense rating. (For instance, if the K'lor'slug attacked the Houjix, then the K'lor'slug would roll 7D to attack and the Houjix would roll 4D to defend.)

If	Then
Attack beats Defense by 7 or more	Kill
Attack beats defense by 6 or less	Push
Tie	Counter-Push
Defense beats Attack by 6 or less	Counter Push
Defense beats attack by 7 or more	Counter-Kill

It's easy enough to draw your own board and pieces. Otherwise you could print out the board from Diagram 1 (which is displayed at half size) and a set of sample pieces. You could even tape these game pieces to chess pieces or miniatures for a more three dimensional effect.

An Example Game of Dejarik:

Chewbacca and Rd-D2 are playing Dejarik during the long trip to Alderaan.

The game is started, and Chewie smugly allows R2 the first move. The pieces come up, and the holograms immediately begin taunting and snarling at one another. Chewie ended up with (From left to right in his starting spaces) the Monnok, the Molator, the Kirtan Strider, and K'lor'slug, while R2 received the Ghhhk, the Houjix, the Mantellian Savrip, and the Ng'ok. (Notice that R2 ended up with both of the mid-range pieces, setting his at a slight disadvantage from the very beginning.)

As his first move, the astromech droid moves the Ng'ok one space counter-clockwise around the outer orbit, in order ot interfere with Chewie's most dangerous piece, the Monnok. As his second move, R2 moves the Houjix into the central space, a very common opening move.

Then the Wookiee takes his turn, and he decides to move his Strider (on space in, 2 spaces clockwise, followed by three more spaces clockwise). This places his piece on R2's side of the board, directly behind the Houjix. Remember that the Strider is a Defensive piece. Chewie is using a bold but not uncommon strategy, trying to bait R2 into attacking his strongest defender.

Chewbacca sits back grinning, while C-3PO, kibitzing, advises his counterpart to be careful.

R2 responds by moving his Savrip into position, and then using it to attack Chewbacca's Strider. Chewbacca expects a victory, or at least a push. The computer makes the calculations. Surprisingly, the Savrip wins, and proceeds to snap the Strider's spine and cackle over it's limp course. [Chewie rolled an 24, R2 got a 31]

"RWWAAAAH!!!"

"He made a fair move. Screaming about it wont help you."

After a brief discussion with Han, C-3PO advises a new strategy: "Let the Wookiee win." Chewbacca chuckles and contemplates his next move….

Rules of Courtier:

Courtier is played with a set of 12 pieces, 6 of one color and 6 of another. The players site on opposites sides of the board, and each control the 6 pieces of their respective colors. Each colored set consists of 5 Guards and one King.

Diagram 4
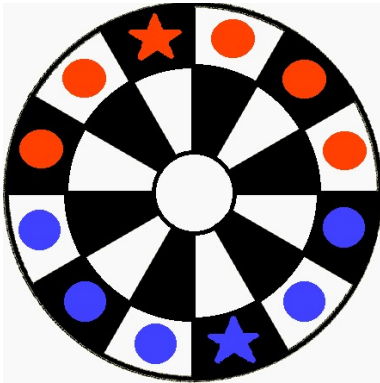
At the beginning of the game, the pieces are laid out along the 6 spaces of the board's outer orbit that are closest to the player, with the King being placed ion each player's immediate right (the 3rd space from clockwise). (See Diagram 4)

The object of Courtier is to capture the opponent's King, before the opponent captures your own.

Unlike in Dejarik, each player moves only once per turn, and each piece may only move one space at a time.

Diagram 5
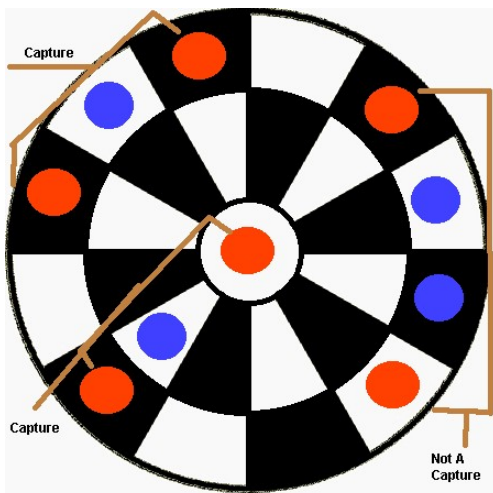
Most Courtier sets have holographic pieces in the form of nobles and guardsmen or warriors dressed in traditional style. The King should be easily distinguishable from the more nondescript and armed Guard pieces. Once the pieces appear on the board, the players must decide between them who will have the first move. Traditionally, blue has the first move. However, the opening move can often have

a very important effect on the player's overall strategy. Because of this, many holochess boards now come with a simple randomizer which determines who will begin the game.

Once the game begins, the play is fairly simple In a turn, a player selects one of his pieces and moves it into an adjacent space, either around the orbit or along the ray. Moving diagonally, or into a space already occupied by another piece, is not allowed. If a capture occurs, the appropriate piece is removed from the board. Otherwise, the opposite player takes a turn, and so on, until one of the player's King is captured.

Capturing: A capture occurs when a player surrounds an enemy piece with two of his own. All three pieces must be on the same orbit or the same ray. A capture occurs ONLY when three pieces are involved (both Guards and Kings may be used to capture). You cannot capture two or three enemy pieces at a time (See Diagram 5) After a capture, the captured piece is removed from the board. If the captured piece is a Guard, then play passes to the other player. If the captured piece is the opponent's King, then the game is over, and the player has won the game.
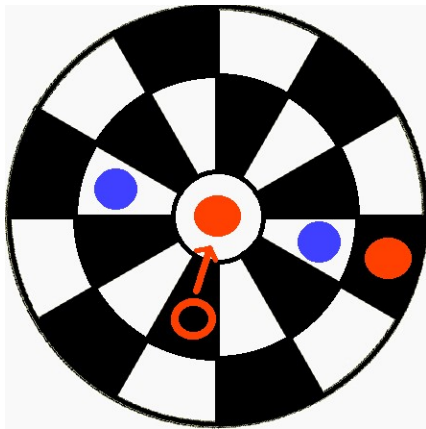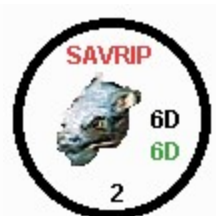

Diagram 6

Red player moves piece as shown. Both inside pieces are removed.

Double-Capturing: A special case of capture rules is when a player moves his piece into a position where he could capture an opponents piece but also be captured himself. (See Diagram 6) When this occurs, both pieces are considered captured and are removed from the board.

General Strategy Tips:

The central space is the pivotal position. Controlling it early gives you an advantage, but it leaves you open for devastating double-captures if you aren't careful.

- In the early stages of the game, you King is very difficult to capture. Defensive players usually keep their King on the outer orbit, with another piece nearby. However, if you start to run low on pieces, remember that your King can be used to capture just as any other piece.
- Think ahead before jumping into double-captures. They may lead you taking control of the center of the board, but going around them often puts you in a better strategic position.
- If you find that the enemy has control of the central space and is trapping all your pieces on one side of the board, don't give up. Keep shifting your pieces. Unless your opponent is an expert, it isn't too difficult to evade the trap as it's closing and then maneuver in behind, especially if the enemy is low on pieces.

HOUJIX	MOLATOR	GHHHK	STRIDER
4D	8D	4D	2D
4D	2D	3D	7D
1	2	2	3

NG'OK	MONNOK	SAVRIP	K'LOR'SLUG
3D	6D	6D	7D
8D	5D	6D	3D
1	3	2	2

Home